

The
Standard
Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

IN THIS ISSUE:

Meditation: The Lord Longsuffering In His Coming

Editorial: A New "Anti-Abstract" Theological Method

Scripture Attacked

An Analysis of the Dekker Decision (see All Around Us)

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MEDITATION—

The Lord Longsuffering In His Coming

by Rev. M. Schipper

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is
longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all men should
come to repentance.*

II Peter 3:9.

1967 A.D. - ANNUS DOMINI - Year of the Lord!
The year of our Lord 1967 is fast drawing to its
close!

Not only 1967 years since the Lord left us to as-
cend into the heavens, where He is seated at the right
hand of God, unraveling the counsels of the Almighty:

and where He continues to intercede for us, and by His
Word and Spirit continues to gather His church, given
Him of the Father.

But also 1967 years in which He has been coming
back to us!

That was His promise!

"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." "And the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; surely I come quickly."

And the prayer of the believing, hoping church has always been, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

But still He lingers!

Is not perhaps the word of the mockers correct? "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

Is it not true, and does it not seem that way to you, that all things continue as they always did? That babies are born, and men die; that kingdoms arise, and kingdoms fall; that summer and winter, springtime and fall, almost monotonously change our seasons; that there are wars and rumors of wars; that there are tornadoes and upheavals, floods and famine; eras of prosperity as well as of recessions? Is it not true that the world continues to develop as it always did? O, to be sure, it may seem to develop a little faster as time marches on. But is it not the same old world?

And is it not plain foolishness to expect that the world in continuance will suddenly come to an end with a catastrophe? That there should be such a few people in it that should be looking for a new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness will dwell? Who, because of their hope, refuse to live along with the present scheme of the world; refuse to take part in the wickedness of the world, to join its unions, to enjoy its pleasures, to build deeply their foundations; who are always talking about the coming of the Lord that will bring them final deliverance? Deliverance from what? Is it not the suffering and deprivation which is brought upon them because they are so odd, and do not want to fit themselves into the times in which they live?

But, beloved, this is all the language of the mockers! Those hilarious fun makers, those supercilious, haughty play boys, who never take life seriously; who are thoroughly worldly minded; who, like the fool, think their houses shall stand for aye. They mock with all that is holy. They jeer at all piety. They have no place in their thinking for prophecy. They live like the beasts that die. They hold the truth under in unrighteousness. They ridicule and persecute the righteous who do not resist them.

Would we not also be foolish to listen to them? Indeed, such would be utter folly!

But that the Lord lingers, we cannot deny! Almost two thousand years have passed, and, though there has been continual change and development, it is still the same heavens of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water. And the Lord is still seated at the right hand of God.

To you who long for His coming, and perhaps become impatient that He lingers, is the Word of God, quoted above, directed!

That Word denies that He is slack concerning His promise!

As some count slackness!

These are they who are impatient, who fail to live

out of the prophetic Word of God. They are they who fail to read the signs of the times, who refuse to hear the footsteps of the Saviour as He walks, yea runs, to realize all that He promised must come to pass before He would actually appear. They are they who are thinking only of their own deliverance, but have lost heart to believe that they cannot be saved without the salvation of all the church. They are they who are inclined to believe the philosophy of the mockers.

To them the Word of God flatly denies that the Lord is slack at all concerning His promise to return.

Rather, it explains, is He longsuffering!

The Lord, that is, the Triune God as He is revealed, and shall be revealed again in the face of the Lord Jesus, is longsuffering to us-ward!

Longsuffering, that divine perfection of love, according to which the Lord constantly and unchangeably wills the final perfection and glory of His people in the way of suffering; and wills their suffering as a means to that final perfection in all its fulness. There are especially three elements in this definition to be noted. First, there is the object in view; namely, the final perfection in glory. He prepares this glory in Christ, a glory which is a reflection of His own perfection, and the state in which God has always beheld His people and loves them. Second, there is the divine, constant, unchangeable affection of God toward His people as He conceived of them in that final state of glory. Third, there is the way of suffering which is necessary for them to enter that final state of glory, in which God will keep them forever. And until they reach that glorious end, He suffers with them.

Behold, how He suffers long over us!

A suffering which began already in eternity when He ordained this people to come unto Him through the way of sin and grace. A suffering He assumed when He united Himself to our flesh in the incarnation, taking upon Himself our nature, and assuming our guilt. A suffering which brought Him into the abyss of death and hell, when He poured out His life's blood on the hill of the skull. And even now, while He is seated in glory, He is still longsuffering over us when He hears our cries, and beholds our tears, while we suffer in this vale of death, ever longing for our perfect and final deliverance.

Long and constant must that suffering be, because the church He loves is constantly in the world that perishes. He was longsuffering over that church when the world perished in the flood, and He delivered righteous Noah and his family. Longsuffering was He when Sodom and Gomorrah perished, and He delivered Lot the righteous. Even now the heavens and the earth are being stored up unto fire, when the heavens shall be rolled back as a scroll and all the elements shall burn with fervent heat, and all that is in the earth shall be consumed in a final conflagration. Until this last day He will be longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish.

Not willing that any should perish!

But that all should come to repentance!

O, do not misinterpret this loving kindness so di-

vine! Do not corrupt this truth by making it a common grace and goodness of God whereby He desires and wills the salvation of all men!

If you know anything of the Scriptures as a whole, you will sense immediately that this cannot be the intent of the Word of God here; for Scripture teaches throughout that God is angry with the wicked every day, and all the wicked will He destroy. Moreover the text itself makes it very plain that not all men, head for head, are meant. The "any" and the "all" are the "us-ward." So that we should read our text thus: "But is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any of us should perish, but that all of us should come to repentance."

Indeed, the Lord is willing that not one of His people shall perish, and that every one of them shall come to repentance!

This will of the Lord is not contingent on their repentance, but it accomplishes it. At the same time He also wills to bear with the ungodly chaff until His precious grain is completely harvested. Then the tares will also be pulled up and destroyed, while the precious grain, upon which He expends His great love and with whom He suffers so long, shall enter into His everlasting glory.

But unto repentance His people must come!

And unto repentance they will come!

His grace in them will change their minds and hearts and bring them to their knees in the true consciousness of their sin and in heart-felt sorrow after God. It will force out of them the cry of the publican of old: O God be merciful to me, a sinner! It will turn them from their evil ways, and cause them to flee from sin to Calvary and the blood of the cross, where they will plead for pardon and where they will taste of forgiveness.

Yes, indeed, not one of His precious ones may be lost. Every one of them must come to repentance. For that He waits in His coming!

What a comforting truth is this Word of God!

From it we conclude that while the Lord tarries

His church is being saved and gathered. The elect strangers are daily being fitted as living stones into God's temple in which He plans to dwell with them forever. Until the very last stone is saved and fitted into that temple, the Lord must tarry.

And until that time the beloved in Christ, the elect strangers, are in the world where they share in the sufferings of Christ. They are strangers in the world and to the world because of their election and the fruits of election which they bring forth. And they, too, must wait for the Lord's coming until all the elect are born, are saved, are brought to salvation through the way of repentance.

In the meantime they suffer. Inwardly they suffer because of the knowledge of their sin and the longing to be completely delivered. Outwardly they suffer because of the wicked world, because of the mockers who daily assail them, reproach them and even bring them affliction.

But in that suffering they are not alone! Their Lord suffers with them. He continues to be longsuffering over them, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Take courage then, children of God! Believe this Word of your God!

Be not so easily affected by the doctrine of the mockers! Cease from your worldimindedness. Repent from your sinful ways and turn with sorrow after God. And remember that His compassions fail not, for He is longsuffering over you, not willing that any of you should be plucked from His hand, but that every last one of you should come unto Him and abide with Him in His eternal glory.

And as this year comes to its end, understand well that there is good reason why your Lord tarries, but also that He will come to you as quickly as He can. And as the bells toll the passing of another year, may He find you on bended knee and praying, not only for His speedy return, but also for the salvation of His entire church through the way of her repentance.

Do not object that this gospel makes men "careless and profane," so that they become utterly passive, seeing that God must do it all anyway, and that we will surely have the victory, whether we fight the good fight of faith or not. For the sovereign grace of God does not enervate man, but strengthen him and steel him to fight. It does not make men passive, but active. It does not make us profane, but it sanctifies us. It fills us with the love of God, so that we gladly receive and heed and obey His Word, and put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day. The assurance that the victory is ours does not make us sit down passively, but causes us to be strong and courageous in the battle.

— H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 113

EDITORIALS—

A New “Anti-Abstract” Theological Method

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

We observed (in the December 1 issue) that at stake in the Dekker Case, according to Dr. Henry Stob, is a deep issue of theological method. We are interested in this matter, in part, because of the fact that the language of the *Reformed Journal* found its way into the Christian Reformed Synod's decision in the Dekker Case in the charge of *abstractness*. But we have a deeper interest. In the first place, we are interested for purely theological reasons. Theological method is of the utmost importance, as is the method followed in any science. The method determines the product, the result, the conclusion of any scientific investigation. If the method is incorrect, then the conclusion will be incorrect. It is thus in theology also. Hence, any theologian, whether of high or low degree, whether professional or amateur, should have the utmost concern and should pay careful attention when matters of method are raised. For this reason I believe that responsible theology demands that the *Reformed Journal*, and particularly Dr. Stob, should devote more than a one-page editorial to this subject. The method should be explained; it should be justified on sound Biblical and confessional grounds; and its benefits and superiority should be clearly set forth. I respectfully suggest that the *Reformed Journal* do this. Its readers are entitled to a complete explanation of an important matter of this kind. Moreover, the entire Reformed theological community should reap the benefits of this new method, if such there are. Perhaps, however, if the *Reformed Journal* cannot place such material, then Dr. Stob, as a member of the faculty, could prepare a detailed essay for the *Calvin Theological Journal*. At any rate, a full explanation and justification of this new method is a *must*. And I believe that no one on this side of the Atlantic is more able to accomplish this task than Dr. Stob. In the second place, we are interested also because all of theology is involved in this method, and especially such basic truths as predestination, the atonement, and the preaching of the gospel. This is true both here and in the Netherlands, where this same new method has been proposed and is being employed with devastating results.

Meanwhile, the *Standard Bearer* will continue to reflect on this matter on the basis of the data available.

Last time we saw that this new method is by its own admission and claim *new*.

This time we shall examine another characteristic, — or at least, a claimed characteristic, — namely, that it is anti-abstract and anti-objective, in distinction from the old method and its product, which is said to be guilty of abstractness and objectivism.

First of all, I will show by means of quotation that this is indeed the claim of this method. All of these quotations are from Dr. Stob's editorial in the *Reformed Journal*, May-June, 1967, pp. 5, 6. In the second paragraph he writes:

No one is here entitled to cast stones at any other; all of us have in the past been victimized by what increasingly appears to be an abstract and rationalistic method of doing theology; but we can ill afford now, when we are just beginning to reach out for a new and more biblically oriented method of theological understanding and construction, to arrest our advance by making pronouncements dictated by a purely objectivistic mode of thinking.

In his third paragraph Dr. Stob seems to equate this abstractness and objectivistic mode with Greek-philosophic thought:

New and responsible biblical studies have taught us to recognize that inherited Greek-philosophic modes of understanding are not suited to the Revelation given by the living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and by the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As far as I am concerned, the above is a platitude, couched in very general terms, and stated without any explanation of what is meant or any proof that the old theology is guilty. Dr. Stob should explain and offer proof. Does he mean, perhaps, that it is wrong to apply logic and the laws of logic to Scripture? Or does he mean something else? Let him say.

The same is true of the generalities employed in the last statement of the same paragraph, where he seems to be trying to describe positively what he means by not being abstract and objectivistic. I would greatly appreciate a concrete, down-to-earth explanation of what the following statement really means. I

have my own ideas; and if they are correct, then this is not a good statement. Here is the statement:

We are beginning to understand that biblical truth is historical, kerygmatic, and existential, and that it exists and has meaning, not in static isolation, apart from the divinely addressed human situation, but only within the context of man's response, only within the context of belief and unbelief.

I, for one, have always believed that biblical truth is historical. But I would surely like some definition of "kerygmatic" and "existential." Let us take an example. Biblical truth is that Jesus is the Son of God. Does Dr. Stob mean that this truth exists and has meaning only within the context of man's response of belief and unbelief? Is that not objective fact,—regardless whether it is believed or disbelieved? And if we deny this, do we not land squarely in relativism and subjectivism,—and, I fear, theologically in Arminian conditionalism? I would like an explanation.

My fears as to what this method implies in its claim of being anti-abstract increase when I read the next paragraph. And they increase not chiefly because of the mention of Dr. Daane, Dr. Pietersma, and Rev. J. De Moor, although the very mention of Daane and Pietersma is by this time sufficient to send theological shivers down my spine. But my fears as to this method increase because of Dr. Stob's analysis of the dispute. Writes he:

It has become evident to many of us—the point has often been made by Dr. Daane and is currently being made by Dr. Pietersma and Rev. J. De Moor—that the present dispute revolves about a pseudo-problem, a problem stated in terms of non-biblical categories, and a problem, therefore, which cannot be solved by the biblical givens. Neither Professor Dekker nor the Committee is questioning the faith; both wish to honor the Scriptures and the Creeds. But both are caught in the toils of a method — the Committee, I'm afraid, much more than Professor Dekker — which prevents them from resolving their differences. Both, though in significantly different degrees, disengage biblical truth from the kerygmatic situation and, by abstracting it, inadvertently, and contrary to every intention, falsify it.

Now I will not enter here into the question whether either Professor Dekker or the Committee is questioning the faith, or whether both wish to honor Scripture and the Creeds. I will only suggest that it would be more correct to write that both *say* that they do not question the faith, and that both *claim* that they honor Scripture and the Creeds. The objective question whether what they say or claim is true can only be answered by the *test* of Scripture and the Confessions. In other words, in a doctrinal dispute you do not judge a man's motives, and you do not judge on the basis of a man's claims of loyalty to the Creeds. But you judge a man's doctrine on the basis of Scripture and the Creeds; and if, then, such a man is truly loyal to Scripture and the Creeds, he will bow to such a judgment.

But the above is in parentheses.

The main point in the above-quoted paragraph concerns method. It is Dr. Stob's claim that the dispute in the Dekker Case revolved about a false problem, that is, a problem stated incorrectly, stated in terms of the wrong categories, non-Biblical categories. Because this is the case, Dr. Stob claims, you cannot come up with the correct, that is, the Biblical answer, an answer solved on the basis of Biblical givens, Biblical data. Moreover, Dr. Stob seems to claim that the basic flaw in the method of both Dekker and the Committee is that they divorce the doctrinal question from the kerygmatic situation, that is (I take it), from the situation of the preaching, in which the preacher proclaims the gospel, and in which the listeners are confronted by the demand of faith and repentance, and in which there is always the two-fold response of faith or unbelief, obedience or disobedience.

Now, Dr. Stob does not elaborate further on this problem stated in terms of non-Biblical categories, nor does he state what he means by the latter, nor does he state how the problem should be couched in terms of Biblical categories. I am afraid that Dr. Stob is rather seeking to be rid of the problem, as I hope to point out later. I am afraid, too, that while he condemns both Dekker and the Committee for being abstract, Dr. Stob by a process of begging the question nevertheless arrives inevitably at Dekker's doctrinal position. This also I will show later. But let us try to understand what he means here by non-Biblical categories. Let us apply what he says about a pseudo-problem by stating the problem concretely. The one problem was about the love of God. The dispute between Prof. Dekker and the Committee may be stated as follows, leaving out of the picture now the fact that the Committee also wants to say that in a sense God loves all men:

Prof. Dekker: God loves all men, elect and reprobate, with a redemptive love.

The Committee: God does not love all men, but only the elect, with a redemptive love.

What are the non-Biblical categories here? As I understand Dr. Stob, he is claiming that categories such as "all men, elect and reprobate" and "the elect only" are non-Biblical categories, abstractions. I am confirmed in this by two items in the dispute: 1) There is running through the entire dispute, especially from such men as Daane and Boer and Pietersma (and Daane has long taken this position), a persistent denial of sovereign reprobation. 2) Dr. Stob himself, in the early part of the Dekker controversy, took the position that there is no sovereign reprobation when he denied that God hates any man. I can come to no other conclusion, therefore, than this, that to Dr. Stob categories like elect and reprobate are abstractions and must not be employed in questions such as: whom does God love? And: for whom did Christ die?

All this is confirmed by the next paragraph of Dr.

Stob's editorial. Here also he does not forthrightly state what his new method is; nor does he offer any proof that his method is the correct one or that the question which he condemns is indeed an un-Biblical question, or that the question which he proposes is indeed any more Biblical or any more helpful. But he furnishes an example. Here it is:

Take, for example, the question: Did Christ die for everybody? Consider that as an abstract question of fact, consider that as a scientific question concerning an objective state of affairs, and you have an insoluble question on your hands. If you answer Yes!, how is it then that not all men are saved? If you answer No!, how is it then that the crucified and risen Christ can be genuinely and unreservedly offered to all? (Stob means: how is it then that the crucified and risen Christ can be graciously and well-meaningly offered to all? This is his doctrine as a Christian Reformed officebearer. HCH) To avoid this impasse, to escape this cul-de-sac, we must descend from the cold heights of abstract "truth" and ask the biblical question: What is every man who hears the preached Gospel — every such man without exception — called upon to believe?

To the last question in the above paragraph Dr. Stob then gives his own answer in the following paragraph. We shall attend to that later. But what can we learn concerning his method from the paragraph just cited?

Notice the question, first of all. It is the basic question: For whom did Christ die His atoning death? There are sub-questions implied in it. They are: Did Christ die for everybody, for every man who ever was born and who yet shall be born? That is, did He die for both elect men and reprobate men? Or did Christ die only for some men, that is, the elect, while the reprobate are excluded from that atoning death? These, of course, were the questions at issue in the position of Prof. Dekker and in the position of the Committee.

Notice, in the second place, that my former philosophy professor speaks in this connection of an *abstract question of fact* and of a scientific (that is, theologically scientific) question concerning an *objective state of affairs*. I object here. My objection is, first of all, that questions of fact are *per se* not *abstract*. They are *concrete*. They are questions concerning *concrete events*. My objection is, in the second place, that it is perfectly legitimate to ask scientific questions concerning an objective state of affairs in connection with the death of Christ, and to come up with scientific, that is, dogmatic and objective answers, statements of dogma, statements of objective doctrinal truth, in response to those questions concerning an objective state of affairs. Why? Because when Christ died His atoning death, that was — to use Stob's language — an objective state of affairs. Something happened when Christ died. That was an actual historical event, a concrete, objective fact. What was that something? He made atonement. For whom? Not, surely, for Himself: He Himself had no debt of guilt

to be expiated. He made atonement for others, either for all men or for some men, but for all those whom He represented on the cross. That happened, it was a concrete event, a fact! Christ in His atonement represented some men on the cross. It is also a perfectly legitimate question, therefore, to ask: *whom* did Christ represent on the cross? And it is also a perfectly legitimate question to ask: how did it come about that Christ represented some men in his atoning death? And it is also a perfectly legitimate question to ask: who decided who would be represented by Christ on the cross? I was not there, for I was born 1900 years later. Abel was not there either: he was born about 4000 years before. And yet I was there, and Abel was there, — representatively and judicially, just as really as though I had been nailed to the tree in person. How could that be? Who decided it? All these questions concern an objective state of affairs, and they must have objective answers. And I want to emphasize, too, that they must not have mere coldly dogmatic answers in the purely academic sense of the word. Theology and the faith are not to be separated. I personally *must* have answers to these questions. They concern my faith, and they concern the faith and the confession of the church and of the saints. Dr. Stob's fallacy, therefore, is that he wants to call abstract what is factual and concrete, and that he does not want objective questions and answers about what, in his language, was "an objective state of affairs."

Notice, in the third place, how he arrives at this conclusion. He creates a dilemma. On the one hand, he says, you run stuck if you answer that Christ died for everybody: for then all men must be saved, but they are not all saved. On the other hand, he says, you run stuck if you answer that Christ died *not* for everybody: for then how can He be well-meaningly and graciously offered to all, which, according to Stob and 1924 He is? Granted Stob's premises, this is indeed a dilemma. This is the dilemma, the insoluble question, created by 1924. It is a false dilemma: its false horn is the doctrine of the well-meant offer. Stob seeks to avoid this impasse, this cul-de-sac, by saying: we must not ask that kind of question. We must not inquire into any objective state of affairs. We must not be abstract and ask for objective answers to objective questions concerning concrete, objective, historical events.

I shall criticize this method further, and show that it is not the method of Scripture and the Creeds. But, in conclusion for this time, let me point out that: 1) Dr. Stob appears to equate *abstract* and *objective*. 2) On this basis and following this method, you will have absolutely no dogmatics left. Every objective statement concerning objective truths, events, facts, works of God, it seems to me, becomes illegitimate. And I detect that this is precisely what is happening in the Netherlands, particularly with respect to the doctrine of predestination, but also with respect to other doctrines, e.g., that of creation and the fall. With respect to the truth of predestination, its end is a neo-Arminianism or neo-universalism.

Editor's Notes

The first note is to some of my delinquent fellow editors. You have all received a schedule informing you when the articles for your department are due. Whether you are observing this schedule or not is known to you and your editor-in-chief. The simple facts are, however, that the *Standard Bearer* runs on a rather tight schedule, and that this schedule calls for sufficient copy in the scheduled departments to fill our 24 pages. The cooperation of *all* is kindly but urgently requested, in order that *all* scheduled departments may appear as scheduled, and in order that the task of writing does not fall increasingly on the editorial department. And please do not think yourself too busy; aren't we all?

* * * * *

To those who wrote in for complimentary copies of our new *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, this word of information. Our supply of the first issue was exhausted all too soon. If you have sent in your name and address, you will be on the mailing list for the second (Spring) issue. If you still desire to be placed on the mailing list, please send your request to Prof. H. Hanko.

Preliminary work is being done with a view to an eventual biography of the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema. Any of our readers who has any pertinent information, any interesting first-hand anecdote, or any worthwhile photograph or snapshot is urgently invited to correspond with me. All helpful information is welcome; but especially information about Rev. Hoeksema's early days in Chicago, his student days, and his early ministry is welcome. Any photographs which are loaned will be returned as soon as possible. Please do not be too quick to think that your information is already known or that it is not worthwhile. Your help will be greatly appreciated. If necessary, arrangements will be made for a taped interview.

* * * * *

Do you know that the *Standard Bearer* is more widely read than we sometimes dream? In fact, its witness goes literally to the ends of the earth. In a recent month, for example, requests for back issues were received from as far away as England and New Zealand. This is mentioned, not to brag, but to encourage both staff members and supporters of our magazine.

TRYING THE SPIRITS—

The Compassion Of Christ

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

We not only believe that God foreknows all things, but that He does not and cannot foreknow without foreordaining. For not only is God's omniscience all-comprehensive and all-embracing, but so is His foreordination. He foreordains whatsoever comes to pass (Acts 4:27f). Therefore it is impossible that He know beforehand anything that has not been already foreordained. There is nothing that can be the object of divine prescience but that which has been preordained. God cannot know, for example, that an event shall occur which He has not ordained to occur. We therefore conclude that God not only foreknew the Fall, but that He foreordained it, and that it was but an incident in the great plan of His eternal purpose according to which He would glorify himself in a glorified people. His primal thought within the divine decree was eternally to tabernacle with the glorified sons of men. To effect this, He planned in His inscrutable wisdom to bring it to pass through the Fall ordained and through

a people predestinated. The decree of God, then, saw His people perfect and holy before it saw them fallen and redeemed (Eph. 1:3-7). He would bring many sons to glory through the Fall and from the ruins of it.

Man, by nature, therefore, is in a very desperate case (Jer. 17:9). The Fall has left him not merely "very far gone from original righteousness," as the expression goes in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, but "wholly gone from original righteousness," i.e., dead in sins, prone to hate God, wholly incapable of doing any good, and prone to all wickedness. He is then in great need of a Savior to cleanse his soul from the damning defilement of sin. But even after sin is washed away in the only fountain for cleansing, the blood of the Redeemer, man needs an Almighty Friend, for he traverses a land of dire dangers, troubles and sorrows. The world is, as never before, dark with sicknesses, diseases, poverty, friendlessness, hopelessness, desertion, treachery, enmity, and the last

enemy, death. Man needs a Redeemer-Friend who can save him and sympathize with him through all these evils. Scripture is quite abundant in references to such a Friend, which richly turn on the theme of the Compassion of Christ. Consulting your concordance, you find that "when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd (Matt. 9:36)." An insight into His heart is had here. Then "Jesus went forth and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick (14:14)." Matthew in the one place shows His concern for the welfare of men's souls; here for the comfort of their bodies. This is further evident in, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they ... have nothing to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way (15:32)." Healing two blind beggars, "Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes (20:34)." Nor did He shrink from the leper, but "moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, 'I will: be thou clean (Mark 1:41).'" He also sympathized with the bereaved, for seeing the sorrowing widow of Nain, "He had compassion on her, and said unto her, 'Weep not (Luke 7:13).'" Indeed, "the Lord is gracious and full of compassion (Ps. 145:8)." We can sing, "He is a kind, compassionate Friend!"

It would be true, too, if we sang, "Jesus knows all about our struggles!" For in every crucible He himself has suffered. "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." If a thorn ever gave you pain, recall that it once pierced His head. If trouble or difficulty strews your path, you will detect along the way His handmarks and footprints. The path of sorrow is stained with the blood-spattered footsteps of the Man of Sorrows. Where you are very conscious of your sin, remember, He knew sin, not His own, but ours laid on Him (Isa. 53:6). Where you suffer almost unbearable slander, He was called a drunkard and a madman. Our sufferings are hardly worth a thought compared to His. He suffered hellish agonies when He descended into hell at Gethsemane and Golgotha. He drank the cup of eternal woe.

Will He have compassion on us? It is well-known that He "is kind to the unthankful and evil" and "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." Certainly unkind, unthankful, evil, ignorant and out of the way exactly describes us by nature. We have such a merciful and faithful High Priest. We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but one who can have compassion. The old covenant priest had to be a compassionate man. What sort of man was he? The writer likes to think he was a man like his maternal grandfather — a strong, fatherly man, with face and mien inspiring confidence, tender, understanding, sympathetic; never high and mighty. There was love in his eye, a smile on his face. He was natural. He was real. When we wanted to see him, he was visible. When we wanted to talk with him, he was gentle. He never treated us as though we were stupid. When we were stupid, he was not impatient. He knew how to

deal with weak and erring children. The world regarded him as "a holy man." He would have been the first to deny it. He was what he was because he had seen and felt a great deal of sin, and experienced a great deal of mercy and divine love. He was the kind of man whose wisdom gave you what you felt you needed, so that you could leave him, without revealing your problem, in a feeling of peace; yet you were drawn to speak out, tell him, and unburden your heart before him for the good that came from the intimate contact with him. That is the kind of high priest we could have wished for, had we lived in old Israel. Yet we would not idolize a man, for our great High Priest is incomparably better.

His is not the compassion of a stranger, of one unrelated to us, but that of Friend (Prov. 18:24), Brother (Heb. 2:12), Husband (II Cor. 11:2), and Father (Isa. 9:6). He knows all about our struggles by experience. He has suffered the same trials as we. He has experienced weariness (John 4:6), hunger (Matt. 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), and poverty (II Cor. 8:9). He knows what it was to have nowhere to lay His head (Matt. 8:20), to lack sympathetic friends (26:40) and to be attacked by the horrible suggestions of the devil. He was perfectly, supremely qualified to show compassion.

Beautifully does C. H. Spurgeon enlarge on the compassion of Christ. "Those who came to the high priest of old, were not often of the rough sort. Those who wished to have fellowship with God through the high priest in the tabernacle or the temple, were generally the timid ones of the people. Remember how she who came when Eli was high priest was 'a woman of a sorrowful spirit'; and the high priests had to deal with many such. The sons and daughters of affliction were those who mostly sought the divine oracle, and desired to have communion with God; hence the high priest needed not only to be a man, but a man of tender and gentle spirit. It was necessary that he should be one with whom those with broken hearts, and those who were groaning under a sense of sin, would like to speak. They would dread an austere man, and would, probably, in many cases, have kept away from him altogether. Now, the mercy for us is, that our great High Priest is willing to receive the sinful and the suffering, the tired and the tempted; He delights in those that are as bruised reeds and smoking flax; for thus He is able to display his sacred qualification. He 'can have compassion.' It is His nature to sympathize with the aching heart but He cannot be compassionate to those who have no suffering, and no need. The heart of compassion seeks misery, looks for sorrow, and is drawn towards despondency; for there it can exercise its gracious mission to the full (Treas. of N.T., IV, 61)."

Christ risen and ascended has still the same compassion He showed in His earthly ministry. Is He not "the same yesterday, and today, and forever?" He had never thrown bread and meat to hungry people as we throw a bone to a dog. He seated them comfortably on the greensward, then He blessed the food and had it distributed in a quiet, orderly way, in multiplied abundance. Being compassionate, He suffers together with

His people in their miseries. This is indicated in, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Saul had pinched the toes, but the head complained. So also now He lovingly and tenderly ministers to His people. He abounds towards them in wisdom and prudence. He yearns over His people with longsuffering. Though ascended on high, His heart is here below. For when a suffering saint groans, He hears the groan. When the deep desire of the saint cannot be expressed by any vocal sound, when there are groanings which cannot be uttered, the heart only aching after Him, He feels the ache of the heart, He knows what it means. When you do not know how to pray as you ought, He interprets the attempt to pray. He has compassion on the ignorant. If you do not know what good you want or need, but only know that there is something you must have or die, He will give it to you. He will interpret the profound longings of your heart, which are beyond your own depth. (Has he not put eternity in man's heart?) What you cannot read in yourself, He will trace and read for you. He

will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly — no good thing, no good in heaven, not even the throne of God (see Rev. 3:21).

Another eminent man put it this way: "Remembering what He himself passed through down here, the Lord Jesus has a tender and continuing sympathy with His suffering members. He has a deep compassion for each of His tried saints, even when He does not see well to set them free at once from their pains. For not only has He their spiritual and ultimate good in view, but, what is yet more blessed, His affections never move Him to ignore the sovereign and all-wise will of the Father. Then let not the deferring of the deliverance, the postponing of relief, cause any to call into question that love which passeth knowledge. Rather let us rest with calm confidence on that sure word, 'His compassions fail not; they are new every morning (Lam. 3:22f).'" (A. W. Pink, "Studies in the Scriptures," XI, 143).

QUESTION BOX—

Concerning the Law in the Old and New Dispensations

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

From the Men's Society of South Holland, Illinois, through their secretary, brother Garret Flikkema, I received the following question: "What is the similarity and difference of the content of the law for the church of the old and new dispensation, as based on Romans 6 and 7?"

REPLY

Questions concerning the law and the saints' relation to the law, both in the old and the new dispensation, always seem to recur. And they are interesting questions. In reply to the above question, the following:

1) I am at a loss to understand this question completely. I do not see what Romans 6 and 7 have to do with this particular question, for one thing. That is, I do not see how Romans 6 and 7 speak specifically of any difference between the old and new dispensation. For another, I do not see what Romans 6 and 7 have to do with any possible similarity and difference of the *content* of the law in the old and new dispensations. And even after a brief conversation with the chairman of South Holland's Men's Society while I was there for a preaching engagement, I must confess I am still at a loss. But perhaps I am a bit dense. Hence, if my re-

marks do not help the brethren in answering their question, they are welcome to make use of the Question Box again. You see, it is entirely possible that the Question Box produces questions instead of answers upon occasion.

2) To the question concerning the *content* of the law (apart, now, from Romans 6 and 7), I would answer: a) That the difference between the old and the new dispensations is that in the former the church had to observe the civil and ceremonial laws, while in the new dispensation "the ceremonies and figures of the law ceased at the coming of Christ" (Confession of Faith, Article XXV). b) That the similarity consists in the fact that the content of the moral law, the Ten Commandments, is never abolished.

3) It is possible that the brethren have in mind the statement in Romans 6:14: "for ye are not under the law, but under grace." If so, then I would point out the following, briefly:

a) The law here must be understood as the whole revelation of the will of God concerning our life in relation to Him and to all things: the moral law as it is briefly expressed in the Ten Commandments, with its chief and only principle: "Love the Lord thy God!"

b) What can that law do? In the first place, it

demands. It keeps before us the will of God concerning us. It constantly reminds us, and deepens the consciousness of it, that we must love God. In the second place, that law blesses and curses. It blesses them that abide in all that is written in the law, that love God with all their heart and mind and soul and strength, perfectly, always, without a flaw. It promises them life. But it curses them that fail even once. It threatens death and destruction upon all them that do not love God. Such is the power and the limitation of the law.

c) Hence, to be under the law, that is, under the dominion of the law, is hopeless. We cannot keep the law. For we are guilty to begin with: we are born in guilt, having sinned in Adam; and we are born under the curse of the law. Moreover, we increase our guilt daily by our actual sins. Hence, the law demands, "Love God!" And we become more and more conscious of that demand if we are under that law. And we cannot, and will not, and cannot will to love God. And thus the law must curse us and assign us to death and to the very lordship of sin. They that are under the law are under the curse of the law; and the curse of the law assigns us to the very slavery of sin.

d) To be under grace means to live in the sphere of grace, to be under the dominion of grace, i.e., under the dominion of that power according to which God makes His people like unto the image of His Son, delivers them from the guilt of sin, from the power of sin, and justifies and sanctifies and glorifies them. It implies that in Christ Jesus we are free from the guilt of sin and the curse of the law. Christ has fulfilled the demand of the law for all His people perfectly, removing all the guilt of sin and forever satisfying the demand of the law, "Love Me." He did so at the head of all the elect by His cross and shedding of His blood, and by His resurrection for our justification. Hence, sin has lost its right to have dominion over us. Thus, in the second place, we are also free from the power of sin. Christ entered into glory and received the Spirit. And by that Spirit He

enters into our hearts, loosens the bonds of sin, establishes His rule in us, so that we are now His. And thus, seeing we are not under the law but under grace, we are no servants of sin, and sin has no dominion over us.

e) All this does not mean that the Christian is under no requirement to observe and to keep the will of God. In this sense the law is never abolished. But the Christian has the law of his God written in his heart, and as such he freely observes that law as it is revealed in God's Word,—not, however, as a law of work-righteousness, but as a fruit of his salvation and as the manifestation of thankfulness.

4) With respect to God's people in the old dispensation, Scripture speaks of their relation to the law more directly in a chapter like Galatians 3. I cannot go into a detailed explanation of this chapter; but let me try to lay down a few main thoughts:

a) The apostle speaks of the fact that since Moses the people of God in the old dispensation were under the law.

b) As such, they were under the curse of the law.

c) However, the same people under the old dispensation had the promise; and that promise could never be disannulled by the law, because the promise was first.

d) The reason for this is that God's people were always in Christ, that Christ also came under the curse, and that, in due time, Christ removed the curse.

e) And faith in the old dispensation found comfort even under the law because in the wider sense the law revealed Christ, revealed that Christ bore the curse for them, and revealed all the blessings of salvation. This it did in all the types and shadows of the law. And this it did through the prophets, who always directed the longing eyes of God's people to the realization of the shadows and the fulfillment of the promise.

These are a few thoughts on a very broad question. Once again, if the South Holland brethren have more questions, they are welcome to call again.

H.C.H.

In this spiritual battle the Christian occupies a very precarious position, in fact, an apparently impossible and hopeless one. Everything that is of this world is against him. He is against himself. For, although it is true that he is a new creature, God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, he is renewed only in principle; and his whole nature stands in diametric opposition to the new principle of life he received in regeneration, and from which he lives by faith. He has but a small beginning of the new obedience, and the motions of sin that are in his members make it quite impossible for him, as long as he is in this life, to live without sin.

— H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," pp. 107, 108

IN HIS FEAR—

The Blessed Giver

by Rev. J. A. Heys

"Legalized theft!"

The quotation marks used on the above phrase are due to the fact that some speak that way. But actually there is no such thing as legalized theft.

Theft is sin. The eighth commandment declares quite unequivocally, "Thou shalt not steal," and it makes no exceptions at all. This is God's unchangeable law engraven in stone to abide as long as this earth is kept in its present form, and abiding even after, through all the melting of the elements with a fervent heat. For this is the will of the unchangeable God, Who changes not. And His will changes not after the new creation is brought forth by His almighty power. It will not then in the new creation be a law engraven in stone to compel obedience but be the law written in the hearts of all the citizens of that holy city to impel them along in perfect obedience before God.

And since theft is sin, it cannot be legalized no matter how hard we may try. You cannot make lawful that which is unchangeably unlawful. You can decide to call it lawful. You can refuse to treat its perpetrator as a sinner. You may even reward the man who steals for his bravery and achievement. You may bestow honours upon him; but you cannot legalize what God calls sin. The authorities may legislate that sin and declare that you may steal with impunity. But it remains God's unalterable will for the rational-moral creature; and no man or group of men is going to change God's mind and will. Men would like to do that. Men have behaved as though they did succeed in changing His law. But by doing so they broke His law and denied Him His glory.

Such an attempt to legalize theft is before our very eyes today. Actually we have many such foolish attempts today. But there is one that we wish to consider, not because it has not been treated exhaustively already, but because the matter is so important and the pressure is building every day and week and year. We refer to the open, bold and rebellious attempts of men by the strike, the boycott and the picket line to force out of the hands and pockets of others that which these strikers covet, because they are in their hearts breaking the tenth commandment that denies covetousness of every kind. That the ungodly, who have no God, will do these things is to be understood. These ungodly are a law unto themselves. Man and his laws are the extent of all rule and regulation with them. And when the state grants the right, the ungodly go ahead with their theft and defend their evil works. But will the believer do this?

We have one general observation to make before we go into the matter more fully and that is the fact that it is becoming increasingly evident that the church membership will be hard put to resist the mark of the beast in the days of the Antichrist. Union membership of countless numbers of church members today, and among them ardent, fierce defenders of these unions and their rebellious actions, and office-bearers who can also serve as union officials, indicates that we are not far from those days of which Jesus spoke, when He asked, "Shall the Son of man find faith on the earth?" and because of which the days shall be shortened, lest the very elect be deceived. For, the reasons and arguments for union membership are the very same as those for submission to the Antichrist's mark. If today one must join the godless unions for bread's sake, it will be even more so the necessity when one cannot buy or sell unless he has the mark of the beast. He who defends membership in the godless union today has already by his deed declared that taking the mark of the beast is also a necessary evil and one which he must and will practice. If he has an obligation before God to provide for his family (and he certainly does) and this absolves him of all guilt when he joins with the godless in their godless unions, yoking himself unequally for the things of this life, that obligation will be there with double force in the days of the Antichrist, for then it will not be a question of lower wages and a gradual sinking into poverty and ultimately into insurmountable debt. But it shall be a matter of eating or not eating, of living or of dying. Before these dreadful days come, we had better re-examine our position and ask ourselves as parents and office-bearers in the church whether we are teaching the younger generations in our churches to take and defend the mark of the beast when it comes, or whether we now already are warning and teaching our children to be dedicated to God, to trust Him and to put away all covetousness.

Let it be understood that our argument is not with unionism in itself. We referred a moment ago to the evil of being unequally yoked with unbelievers. This no man will seek by faith but only in unbelief. Paul presents the matter very powerfully in II Corinthians 6, and no believer reading these words of the apostle, and believing them to be the Word of God through the apostle, can in the exercise of faith and by a walk in His fear go ahead and unite with men whose principles are so diametrically opposed to all the things of faith.

But the mere action of uniting with others is nowhere condemned in Holy Writ. Abraham was confederate with certain Canaanites; and we have no reason for doubting that they were believers. This federation is nowhere condemned in the Word of God. Merely to unite to have one's voice heard is not wrong. Raising one's fist, however, to get action when a request fails is quite something else. To ask for a raise is one thing. To prevent the employer from adding to his income, because you believe that he does not give you sufficient reward for your labors is something entirely different. Getting him "over the barrel" and taking advantage of him, coercion of any sort and damage to his property *and to his business and income* is always sin and a theft that is never legal before the eyes of the holy God Whom we are in all things to serve.

But our argument with the so-called neutral unions, and in fact with any union that advocates and uses the strike clause, is the fact that they try to legalize theft and dishonouring of the authorities. They have for their principle that might makes right. Because they have joined ranks and have the power to stop production, hurt the employer, get him "over the barrel," have him where he is going to get hurt if he does not come across with the demands of the union, they take out of the pocket and hand of the employer that which he did not intend to give. And we may add what we already suggested. All this stems first of all from a sin against the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's...." And taking out of a man's pocket, forcing him to hand over what is his, and he has no intention of handing over, is sin, for it is theft. And when you add damaging his business, wrecking his machines, turning over his trucks, spilling and spoiling his goods and defacing and damaging his property, you have more sin added to the illegal action.

The State may allow all this and look the other way. The police may be called out to protect the property-destroyers; the authorities may pass legislation that tells the Christian who will not perform these anti-christian deeds that he cannot work in a particular factory, unless he also subscribes to such evil and promises to perform such wickedness together with the godless in that factory; but before God this does not legalize such devilry. It remains theft and rebellion rooted in covetousness. Especially is this true when, as is the case with all these so-called neutral unions, a contract has been signed to work for a certain

amount of money per hour with all the fringe benefits. A hard and fast agreement has been signed and goes into effect. The contract runs for two or three years, and just before or after it is up, a strike is called with the intent of getting a new and better contract. When that contract comes to its close the employer has NO obligation to those with whom he has signed a previous contract. If they want to quit their jobs because they consider the pay too little, that is their privilege. Let them look for work elsewhere. But for the union to demand out of the hand and pocket of the management before a hand is lifted in work and before a contract will be signed is taking away from the employer's hand and pocket that to which the employee has no right. He has no rightful claim to any pay before he works; and he certainly has no right to threaten the man for whom he has not worked and will not promise to work if he is not given a certain amount of remuneration, if he would work. We repeat, let him quit his job. Let him look elsewhere. Let him tell the boss that he will not work for that amount; but he has no right to claim to hold his job, keep others from working for that employer, lock up his building, put a picket around it, allow no goods to be brought in or be shipped out of that plant and all the other forms of coercion. And it is theft when he does all this to get another filthy dollar! It is rebellion and is breeding in our nation a whole generation of rebels, rioters, revolutionists and revolters!

We say again, that ungodly men will do this, we can understand. For they are a god to themselves. But that the child of God, that the one whose name expresses that he would walk in His fear will ignore the precept "I will recompense, saith the Lord" and again "Vengeance is mine," we cannot understand. And in His fear, we will bow even to the cruel, the froward, the merciless, greedy employer who withholds what we have coming. In His fear we will not sin against the employer, just because he sins against us. We will not say, "I will be like God. I will take His place and take things into my own hands. Vengeance is mine. Jehovah is too slow and unconcerned with my lot." In His fear we bow in reverence before God, fight the covetousness that is in us, would rather go without than to get anything in the way of stealing; and we would give God the praise that is due to His name by walking in His law.

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FROM HOLY WRIT—

The Book Of Hebrews

by Rev. G. Lubbers

Hebrews 4:14-16 (Read from own Bible)

The writer here returns to his point of departure in Chapter 3:1-5. There he had spoken of the great apostle and high-priest of our profession, Jesus, who was faithful to him that appointed him, even God. After a most relevant digression in the Chapters 3:7 to 4:13, he now picks up the thread of the argument, and repeats the exhortation which comes to the church as partakers of the heavenly calling. We do well to take notice, once more, of the exhortations which come to us with so much comfort, urgency and encouragement.

HOLDING FAST THE PROFESSION (Chapter 4:14)

The writer begins this paragraph with the inferential particle "wherefore," which is translated "having then," or "since we have." The fact that we have a great high priest, namely, Jesus, has been established. Fact is, that this reality is exactly the confession of both the writer to the Hebrews and of the church. Hence, he writes in the first person "let us hold fast our confession." Once this had been their public confession of faith. They had been fully persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, who should come into the world. To Him we must hold fast, we must be faithful and not fall away from the living God by an evil heart of unbelief. Rather we must have a hearing mingled with faith as the gospel of Christ is preached to us. We must enter by faith into the final "*Sabbatismos*, the Sabbath rest of the heavenly Canaan, which "rest" is not the type and shadow of something greater to come, but it is the final rest! And because the word of God is living, energetic, sharper than any two-edged sword, laying all things open and naked, let us give heed and hold fast!

The verb here to *hold fast* in the Greek is "kratein," which means; to take hold of and hold fast, to never let go. Hence to cleave to with firm faith, lively hope and ardent love; to love the word of the Gospel, and to cling to the high-priest with all the power of faith and child-like trust. This means that the Hebrews must not be seduced by those of the synagogue of the unbelieving Jews, which is the congregation of the Devil, to let go of the confession concerning the Christ. Thus in the book of Revelation, Chapter 2:13, we read "and

thou hast *hold fast* my name, and hast not denied my faith in the days of Antipas my martyr." Again in verse 25 of the same Chapter we read "Nevertheless, that which ye have *hold fast* till I come." No, Jesus does not cast a great and heavy burden upon us. It is the light burden and the easy yoke which we must hold fast. Then we shall find rest for our souls, and no one shall ever be able to take our crown. Likewise we read in Revelation 3:11 "Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown." For this Christ, who speaks here, suffered, died and rose again, that he might bring many sons to glory! (Hebrews 2:10)

For this Christ, this high priest, is the *great* high priest of our confession. He is none less than the *Son of God!!* He is not a mere man as were both Moses and Aaron, and as were all the prophets. He is Immanuel, God-with-us! And he is glorified, he is "passed through the heavens." The term in the Greek passed through the heavens is "dieleeluthota," which is a perfect participle. The perfect tense here indicates that this Jesus, the Son of God, is in the abiding and completed state and condition of having passed through the heavens. He has gone up to the very throne of God, and sat down as the King-priest at the right hand of the majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:3) He is the very effulgence of God's glory, the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, and, who, when he had made the purification of our sins by himself, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high! Indeed, all things have been placed under his feet. (I Corinthians 15:26, Psalm 8:7, Hebrews 2:6-8) He is *great!* Thus he was announced by the angel Gabriel to Mary in the little city of Nazareth before His birth. Says Gabriel to Mary, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32, 33) In Him the hope of Israel is attained, the fulfilment of all the prophecies. In Him we see that great prophet foretold by Isaiah "... and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and

his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father (Father of eternity) Prince of Peace!" He is the one seen by Daniel in the night visions! (Daniel 7:14)

Truly, we have a *great* high priest! He is the great priest over the house of God. (Hebrews 10:21)

He is such that ever we can see that he has begun in the deepest depth of hell and has passed through the heavens!

Him let us cling to in joyful and confident hope and confession.

DRAWING NIGH TO THE THRONE OF GRACE (Hebrews 4:16)

Unless we hold fast the confession in Jesus as the great high priest we shall never have the courage to draw nigh to the throne of God. O, do not underrate what it means to draw nigh to God! All things are naked and opened before the face of Him with Whom we have to do! Our God is a consuming fire! Devouring flame before him goes; and dark the tempest round him grows. And then we must draw near to this God? How is that possible?

Besides, the writer emphasizes that we must draw near with "boldness" unto the throne of grace. Again we ask: how is that possible? Boldness, what is it. The term in the Greek is "parreesias." This does not refer to brutal boldness which defies respect and awe and humility before God. Rather it is a "boldness" rooted in the knowledge and confidence of childlike faith which takes God at his Word of promise, the Word of the gospel. Such faith takes the shoes from off the feet. It is the undoubted confidence of Christians relative to their fellowship with God. (Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 3:6; 10:35) It is of this boldness and fearless courage that John speaks in Chapter 2:28 "...little children, abide in him; that, if he shall be manifested, we may have *boldness*, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." Again, we read in I John 4:17 "Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have *boldness* in the day of judgment; because as he is, even so are we in the world." What a godly boldness this is! It is deepest reverence and humility that believes that the Lord says "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37)

Why can we have such confidence? Because we draw nigh to the throne, which is "the throne of *grace*." A study of the Scriptures will show that God's throne is his regal relationship to us. He is the Judge. He directs all things from his throne. This is evident from the vision of the throne in Revelation 4:2. All of the history of the world, the judgments and the great salvation of God's people are directed from God's throne. What makes this throne a throne of grace is that Jesus has ascended through the heavens and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Permit me to make an observation here. For many years the conviction has grown upon the writer of these lines that in the Old Testament temple the Ark of the Covenant was the symbolic throne of grace and mercy. It is the throne where God dwells with his people in

the inner sanctuary; here we find the mercy-seat upon the Ark of the testimony. Here the blood of atonement was sprinkled on the great day of atonement. And from this throne flowed symbolically "streams of mercy never ending." The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth became through Jesus Christ. When Israel drew nigh to God in the Old Testament dispensation they went up to the temple, to the house of God. And here in the high priesthood of Aaron they can draw nigh in the full assurance of hope and faith. For imperfect as their worship was, God had provided for the believers a man upon whose head had been placed the mitre on which was fastened the golden signet "Holy To Jehovah." And we read "Aaron shall bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall always be upon their forehead, that they may be accepted before Jehovah." (Exodus 28:36-38) Thus Israel can draw nigh to the throne. It is all of grace. For the throne is one of grace itself.

The very term in the Hebrew language for "to draw near" is the standing term for the act of worship in Israel. Thus we read in Psalm 73:28 "But it is good for me to *draw near* unto God, I have made the Lord Jehovah my refuge, that I may tell of all thy works." This certainly indicates that one draws near to God to make God our "refuge." He is our refuge from the load of guilt and sin, and in the midst of all our trials and temptations. This is very beautifully expressed in Psalm 65:4 "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to *approach* unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, thy holy temple." Had not the writer to the Hebrews, in connection with entering into the rest, quoted from Psalm 95, and does this Psalm not speak of drawing near to the throne of grace, when it says "...Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise unto him with psalms...O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before Jehovah our maker: for he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture. Today, oh that ye would hear his voice!"

Either we draw nigh unto God in this assurance of faith or we fall away from the living God. Faith is commitment to God. It is to believe him. (*Believe* is really a Holland term for to "belove" one). It is faith rooted in love, the will to love God. It is a basic attitude. To draw nigh to God is coming to bow down before God, to kneel before him, to adore his mercies with ardent love and thankfulness. Not to draw nigh to God in full assurance of faith indicates a basic fear, the being estranged from the life of God, to be without hope and without God in the world. It is unbelief!

It ought to be crystal clear from the meaning of drawing near that unless we "hold fast" to the profession which is ours concerning the great high priest Jesus, we shall never draw near to God at all. He is the way, the truth and the life, and no man can come unto the Father except through him. (John 14:6) Pure doctrine is of paramount importance for a healthy and vigorous life of faith and peace with God.

PAGES FROM THE PAST—

On-Going Reformation

-4-

(This is a continuation of the translation of a series of articles by the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema on the subject "*Voortgaande Reformatie*."')

In our last article on the above subject we observed that the Reformation of the Churches takes place through Secession as soon as it has appeared impossible to reform the Church within the Church.

Further, we noted that this impossibility of reforming the Church within the Church does not then first become a fact when a certain church has become in the absolute sense of the word false church. A certain church can manifest the distinguishing marks of the false church in varying degrees. To a greater or lesser degree it can corrupt the doctrine, desecrate the sacraments, or neglect discipline. Absolutely false church it does not quickly become.

However, when in a certain church communion the wicked gain the upper hand and begin to dominate, so that they who lift the trumpet to their lips to call to repentance and conversion no longer have a place, but are persecuted and cast out of the synagogue because of their faithful testimony, then the only recourse for the faithful is the way of secession, the way of continuing the true church in a new church communion.

In the meantime, this is not the only way in which one can conceive of the Reformation of the Churches.

Another way to such a Reformation is the way of the *veillee*, known in our country as *revival*.

Revival is the Reformation of the Churches through spiritual awakening.

We should be on our guard, however, against all kinds of false conceptions and wrong practices and movements which especially in our country present themselves under the name of revival.

First of all, many churches are found in our country which manage to extend their lagging existence for a time through the means of periodic "revivals." This is a great evil. In such churches they have long since weaned away from regular and covenantal training and instruction of the believers and their seed. At best, the preaching consists yet of a gospel on a thumbnail. Not infrequently, however, the people have already weaned away even from that gospel, poor in content though it may be; and on the sabbath day the assembly is treated to a lecture (and a very poor one, at that) about various subjects which have absolutely no connection with the truth of the Word of God. Gradually, however, the audiences become smaller. People do not come to church any more. At first they come to church only once a Sunday, in order to devote

the rest of the day to various worldly pleasures. It does not take long before the one remaining service is attended only by a few women and children. During the summer months the church doors remain closed. During the winter the weather conditions do not always permit church attendance. There is really no Church any more. About the truth people know little or nothing. Of God's covenant they have never heard. A conception of the church they do not have. Things go from bad to worse. But now there appears from time to time a *revivalist*, who is advertised far and wide, who must once more arouse a little life in the dead bones, — at least to the extent that the people will again, under the influence of such an awakening, attend church for a while. To be sure, this influence does not long endure. Soon the death is in the pot again; and finally it becomes impossible to remove it. And thus, at last, the church doors are shut for good, and an entire community sinks away into a heathen condition.

May our churches be spared from such "revivals"!

They have nothing in common with genuine revival.

At stake in them is not the truth, the sanctity of God's covenant, but only the lagging existence of a church which is in fact no church.

But this is not the only matter to which we wanted to point.

We also had our eye upon such movements, which are encountered especially in our country, in which suddenly a mighty personality appears on the scene, is adept at gathering around himself through various means thousands upon thousands of people, and presents himself as an Evangelist and a preacher of repentance. We refer to such movements as those of Moody, of Pearsall Smith, of the Salvation Army, of Billy Sunday and others. (This was written before the day of Billy Graham. HCH)

Now it is not at all our intention to deny that, as far as some of these revivalists are concerned, they are

Now it is not at all our intention to deny that, as far as some of these revivalists are concerned, they are prompted by personal zeal and the desire, as some would put it, "to win souls for Jesus." Of many of them we cannot even believe that. We simply cannot believe that the fear of the Lord and the love of Christ can also reveal themselves in the wonderful acrobatics which a Billy Sunday could "sell" the people, nor in the bombastic, proud, blasphemous language which he could utter both in preaching and in prayer.

For the rest, however, we do not wish to pass judgment on these things.

We will certainly declare also of all such movements that they have nothing to do with actual revival, that they are erroneously known by the name *revivals*, and that as far as we are concerned we do not expect from them any real fruit for the Church of God.

All these movements are extra-ecclesiastical; they stand outside of the Church.

Fact is that they find their power and their reason for existence exactly in the decline and apostasy of the Church. The leaders of such movements usually know how to capitalize on the defects and sins, the weaknesses and wrongs of the church. They appear to delight in emphasizing what is wrong in the Church of the Lord. And they certainly do not seek their strength in calling the Church back to the old paths and the old truth. On the contrary, their strength continues exactly in the existence of that multitude who have broken with Covenant and Church, but whose emotions are stirred by the strongly emotional repentance-preaching of the *Revivalist*.

Such revivals do not aim at the Church, but they exist and proceed apart from the Church.

They do not intend the spiritual awakening of a church whose life is in decline, but a winning of souls for Jesus, apart from the Church of Christ.

They do not call for a return to the maintenance of the full truth of God in Christ. On the contrary, they are without exception characterized by the insidious heresy of general atonement and the free will of the sinner.

All such movements find no support in Scripture and will in the end appear to be harmful for the Church and to stand in enmity over against the Church.

Neither do we mean by revival that which came to manifestation in the Netherlands in the form of so-called companies, or fellowships (*gezelschappen*).

The church declined in grace in almost every respect. Doctrine was no longer maintained in its purity; there was simply no thought of ecclesiastical discipline; spiritual piety of life was missing; people went along with the world, and the Christian Confession was not heard from their lips nor seen in their walk.

And now they gathered together as a few believers, who came together deeply aggrieved by this condition of the Church, in order to edify one another and comfort one another in these difficult and unspiritual times.

They formed a kind of church within the Church.

No, they did not intend any secession. They remained with the Church. They even attended the worship services. But what was real and true came only then, when the hour for their "fellowship" struck. Then came the time of spiritual joy.

Not seldom these gatherings would evolve into a manifestation of false and sickly mysticism, the chief characteristic of which, again, soon made its appearance as a stinking pride under the form of lowliness and true humiliation. Indeed, instead of applying themselves to the study of God's Word, in order to examine themselves in its light, they soon tore themselves loose from that Word, in order to speak from their own experience and to regard that subjective

experience as the genuine and true thing. They would then relate to one another their conversion-experiences. And it was not only thus, that they would actually relate what God had done for their souls; but there would arise in such fellowships a competition as to who had travelled the deepest way. And thus it came to pass not infrequently that someone's way, unnoticed by himself, would become ever deeper and more terrible the more often he told the story. And let alone the fact that in that way they became ever more sickly, they also began more and more to set up their own conversion-experience as a criterion. One had to have just such experiences, then, if he wanted to join in the conversations about regeneration and conversion. Thus everyone was weighed and measured and judged, and usually found wanting, until finally there were only a few lamenting, pious souls left, who formed the real church within the Church.

Especially in some parts of the Netherlands these fellowships developed into a morass of sickly mysticism.

The traces of this one finds in our country among not a few. The chief characteristic of such sickly people is exactly that they have no concept of the church. Just as in those fellowships they were concerned about a kind of spiritual awakening, about a revival, but only of themselves, not of the church; just as in and through these "fellowships" they did not bother at all with the ecclesiastical way, but went their own, self-chosen way; so with these descendants of such false mystics there is precisely a lack of a correct presentation and conception of the Church of Christ and of His Covenant.

You can observe this in everything.

On the sabbath a mixed multitude really assembles, instead of the congregation of God in Christ. There are the *assured ones*, who may and dare to confess that they are Christ's property; secondly, there are the "seeking souls," who already searched for years and have never found, and who would take it ill of you if you emphasize that they should finally find what they claim to be seeking; and, in the third place, there are also the *ungodly and unconverted*, who still have no part in the kingdom of Christ. The preacher must also reckon with this. He must be careful that he does not address his audience as "beloved in the Lord." It is better to say: "Dear friends." In the preaching he must also be careful that he makes a precise distinction between the different groups. Especially in the applicatory remarks he must have a special word for each group. He must take care that he does not point to the wickednesses of those who consider themselves children of God. He must not touch their pride and self-exaltation. Further, he must allow the seeking souls quietly to continue seeking: for they do not want it any other way. And to the delight of everyone, even of themselves, the preacher must preach thunder and lightning especially to the actually present or the imaginary ungodly.

The same lack of a correct conception of the Church comes to manifestation in their view, or at least in their action with respect to the sacraments.

If they had their way, they would baptize all who are presented for baptism in the church. Since this is impossible, they allow the "wicked and unconverted" to make a certain confession of the truth, as they call it, in order that they may nevertheless be able to have their children baptized.

But when it comes to the Lord's Supper, then they begin to weigh and to judge,—not themselves, but others! Only a few, the prominent ones, the specially graced ones, the assured ones, take their place at the table of the Lord. The rest of the congregation hesitates and stays away from the table of the Lord, or do not even give it a thought to join with those "perfect ones" at the Lord's table.

Thus they separate baptism and the Lord's Supper. And all this arises out of the same defect: they have no conception of the Church.

However this may be, also such "fellowships" have nothing in common with a true revival. And this is true because they do not aim at the Church, but within the Church they attempt to promote their own upbuilding in an altogether unecclesiastical manner.

No, revival is an act of the Spirit whereby He arouses the Church out of the spiritual slumber into which it has sunk.

It can happen that a church declines with respect to doctrine and life. The warning voice of the watchmen on the walls of Zion was silent for a time. And the Church fell asleep. And if under such conditions of lethargy the Spirit of Christ raises up men who perceive this decline of the Church of God, who bemoan her miserable estate, who again raise the trumpet to their lips, not to address the wild masses outside of the Church and there to lament the condition of Zion, but to call within her walls and to her citizens: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead!" and if that same Spirit then also works in the bosom of the Church with irresistible grace, opens the eyes, pierces the ears, unlocks the hearts, humiliates and fills with the fear of God, until once again sorrow and repentance and a turning to the God of the fathers come to manifestation,—then you have revival, reformation through genuine spiritual awakening!

ALL AROUND US—

Scripture Attacked

An Analysis of the Dekker Decision

by Prof. H. Hanko

When attacks are made against the veracity of the Word of God they are usually concentrated against the miracles of Scripture. It stands to reason that this would be the case. If suspicion and doubt are cast upon these miracles, then the whole structure of the Word of God and its truth collapses. In our scientific age this is exactly what is being done. Miracles cannot be harmonized with a natural and scientific explanation of things; and, bowing before the idol of science, men discard Scripture.

A couple of instances of this are to be found in the Reader's Digest and the *Grand Rapids Press*. In the November *Reader's Digest* an interesting article appeared concerning the explosion of a volcano on the Greek island of Santorini about the 15th century B.C. The article described the tremendous force of this explosion and the consequent disappearance of the island. It also found evidence that this explosion explains the disappearance of a very advanced civilization and quite possibly explains the mystery of the fabled Atlantis. However this may be, the article goes on to find in this explosion a possible explanation for

the ten plagues which God sent upon Egypt at the time of Israel's deliverance from the house of bondage and the destruction of Pharaoh's hosts in the Red Sea. This part of the article reads:

A second great historic consequence of the Santorini consequence is the effect it may have had on northern Egypt, 450 miles away, where the children of Israel labored as slaves at the time. Historians have long noted the resemblance between the Ten Plagues, as recorded in the Bible, and disasters that have accompanied volcanic eruptions. The surrounding waters may turn a rusty red, fish may be poisoned, and the accompanying meteorological disturbances frequently create whirlwinds, swamps and red rain.

The Ten Plagues produced similar phenomena. The waters of Egypt turned red as blood, killing fish and driving frogs on shore. Darkness covered the land for three days. The heavens roared and poured down a fiery volcanic hail. Strong winds brought locusts, which destroyed what crops remained. Insects, which bred in the rotting bodies and swamps, brought disease to cattle and humans. Death was so

rampant as to amount to the killing of the "firstborn" of every family.

Egyptian documents confirm the disaster. "The land is utterly perished...the sun is veiled and shines not," says one papyrus. "O that the earth would cease from noise, and tumult be no more!" laments another. "The towns are destroyed...no fruits nor herbs are found...plague is throughout the land."

Did the enslaved Israelites take advantage of the confusion and begin their epic migration to the Promised land? As evidence, some biblical scholars cite I Kings 6:1: "And it came to pass, in the 480th year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel..." Since Solomon reigned from 970-930 B.C., that puts the Exodus right around the time that Santorini exploded.

The Bible relates that Pharaoh pursued the Israelites and drowned in the sea with his army. Egyptian inscriptions also refer to this event. Galanopoulos attributes the disaster to the tidal waves created when the cone of Santorini dropped into the sea — which could have occurred weeks or months after the eruptions, and the plagues, first began.

He points out that the Hebrew words *yam suf* can mean either "Red Sea" or Reed Sea," and declares that many scholars believe it was the latter that the Bible refers to. He identifies the location as Sirbonis Lake, a brackish body of water between the Nile and Palestine, which is separated from the Mediterranean by a narrow bow of land. He believes that the Israelites fled across this dry bridge, with the waters "on their right hand and on their left," during the interval when the sea was drawn back toward the Aegean, and that the Egyptians were caught in the huge returning tidal wave. The interval would have been about 20 minutes.

Admitting that these theories "stand on shakier ground than those concerning the destruction of Minoan civilization," the *Reader's Digest* is guilty of an open denial of the miraculous in Scripture. But even apart from this, all sorts of questions remained unanswered by such an explanation. How is one to explain that these plagues came and went at the specific command of Moses and Aaron? How can one explain that the last seven plagues, while destroying the land of Egypt, were not present in the land of Goshen where Israel dwelt? How can we, without denying Scripture altogether, explain that the firstborn of the Egyptians and of their cattle were killed in the last plague while the firstborn of the Israelites on whose doorposts blood was smeared were spared the death which the angel of God brought if we try to explain things by a volcanic explosion? These questions could be multiplied. No scientific explanation for these events can possibly do justice to the Scriptural account. One is placed before the options of bowing before Scripture and ignoring these feeble attempts of wicked men to destroy Scripture or accepting these explanations and discarding God's own record of how these things came to pass.

But above all, a denial of these plagues will lead inevitably to a similar denial of the judgments which

God will some day send upon a wicked world — judgments which so closely parallel the plagues upon wicked Egypt.

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The other story in the *Grand Rapids Times* has to do with the fall of the walls of Jericho. It contains a news release of the Associated Press from Tel Aviv, Israel and reads:

Joshua cheated. The walls of Biblical Jericho came tumbling down after he blew his trumpet all right, but he'd undermined them first.

That's what Dr. Jacob Feld, a New York consultant engineer on the causes of structural failure, thinks.

Feld found signs the foundations had been dug away when he first studied the walls of Jerico in 1931 during an excavation of the site.

"The lower stones, which must have been the foundations of the walls, were tipped downward and outward, as though someone had undermined the wall from the outside," Feld said during a recent visit here.

"It was obvious someone had removed the earth under these stones from the outside of the wall."

What probably happened, he believes, is that Joshua, leading an army of Israelites against the Philistines, shrewdly guessed that storming the walls would be costly and decided to use a little trickery. He must have had some knowledge of soil mechanics and calculated that if his men undermined the walls the city could be taken virtually without a struggle.

So he set his diggers to work in the soft soil under the walls.

"To create a diversion, he surrounded the city and had his priests blow their shofars (rams' horns) every so often to distract attention," Feld theorizes.

On the seventh day when everything was ready, the Israelite got all his priests to blow their horns together extra loud seven times while his men "gave a great shout." And down came the precariously balanced walls.

But, Feld adds: "This theory doesn't rule out the religious view that the event was an act of God. The Almighty may have worked through Joshua whom He directed."

Well, however Joshua did it, it made a great song.

Once again, the question is: "How then did that section of the wall upon which stood the house of Rahab remain standing? And similar questions could be raised. But what must one do with the records in the New Testament concerning this event? It was after all "by faith" that the walls of Jericho fell and "by faith" that Rahab perished not with them that believed not.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE DEKKER DECISION

Perhaps the most accurate and honest evaluation of the decisions of the Christian Reformed Church on the Dekker Case yet to appear are to be found in a recent article by Harry R. Boer in the *Reformed Journal*. While we cannot quote the whole article nor offer a complete analysis, it is interesting to note what Prof. Boer has to say.

He reflects on the decisions from three different viewpoints: the juridical aspect, the theological aspect and the implications for the future.

With respect to the juridical aspect, Dr. Boer points out accurately that the Synod "did not itself clarify the issue or make any theological judgment on the central point at issue: does God or does God not love all men with a redemptive love and is it therefore right or wrong to say to any man, 'Christ died for you'?"

He then goes on to make several points concerning the legal aspects of the decision.

In the first place, after admitting that he has no idea of what Synod meant by calling the statements of Prof. Dekker "abstract," he writes concerning the word "ambiguous" as follows:

Presumably it ("ambiguous") means that Professor Dekker in the quotations in question, and perhaps in writings that were not cited, had not been wholly clear as to his meaning, had written in such a way as to allow for more than one interpretation, or had possibly associated incompatible ideas in the same statement. How the synod could arrive at any such judgment one can only guess at. If the discussion at synod proved anything at all, especially during the crucial second session, it was that everyone knew exactly what Professor Dekker was trying to say and (a) agreed with it or (b) disagreed with it or (c) entertained reservations with respect to Professor Dekker's views but defended his right to express them. On the central point at issue Professor Dekker spoke with clarity and decisiveness. His supporters understood him, his opponents understood him. It was precisely this mutual understanding of his position that precipitated the debate...

This too is a correct evaluation of Synod's actions. There really was no doubt about it on Synod that the statements of Prof. Dekker were clear.

In the second place he wonders about the legitimacy of declaring by official decision that statements are ambiguous when there is no proof offered for this and when there is no evidence given in the decision that this ambiguity was "offensive to the truth."

Thirdly, he faults the Synod for using three quotations from Prof. Dekker which did not appear in his public writings, but which were drawn from his discussions with the Doctrinal Committee.

Fourthly, again correctly, he fails to see how the decisions of Synod were really ("could be remotely construed by Synod") an answer to some specific overtures appearing on Synod.

And finally he points out that the final decisions were in contravention of the mandate given to the Study Committee in 1964. His conclusion is

All in all, the judicial face of the synodical decision presents a rather tired and forlorn look, leaves the Church perplexed, and invites us all to pray harder when the synodical bark ventures out into the deep and perilous waters of theological controversy.

Turning next to the theological implications of this decision, Dr. Boer finds a great deal of satisfaction

in what Synod did. After pointing out that Synod did not condemn the position of Prof. Dekker, did not accept the position proposed by the Study Committee, and did not accept the position of Dekker, he writes:

Theologically there are in the synodical decision the qualities of tentativeness and uncertainty, a not-taking-of-sides, an openness to continued exploration and discussion. At the same time, this tentativeness and openness has come as a revelation to many. The determined effort to bring about a condemnation of Professor Dekker's views failed completely.

But he finds comfort in this, for this has clearly shown, in his opinion, that the Church endorsed doctrinal freedom and has permitted discussions of difficult questions to go on without a hampering of theological inquiry.

Finally, Dr. Boer writes concerning "perspectives for tomorrow." Summing up what he has to say, he writes

There have emerged out of the synodical decision some facts about Christian Reformed ecclesiastical life that are both disturbing and hopeful.

By this he means:

I simply affirm that two minds exist in the Church, that they are theologically in tension, and that this created an impasse at synod that was papered over by a rather meaningless formula so far as the written decision is concerned.

On the other hand, both of these minds are clearly one in Christ and both placed the unity of the Church above the doctrinal diversity that existed.

The question which this poses is

How are these diverse minds to live together in the one Church without again and again creating impasses which, as in this case, cannot be resolved without ecclesiastical conflict culminating in a decision that bears little relevance to the conflict and only results in damage to the dignity and public image of the Church's highest ecclesiastical assembly?

In answer to this question the Dr. suggests several points. One is that much of the discussion which went on during the controversy was evidence of the fact that "the Christian Reformed Church has much to learn in the way of how to conduct theological discourse and controversy in its denominational communion."

If in the future there is not more openness to one another's viewpoints and restraint in pointing the accusing finger of heresy, then more of what has happened can be looked for. In the end there will result a denomination that is disgusted by theological and ecclesiastical infighting and will go its way with "a plague on both your houses."

Secondly, he pleads for new rules "governing the initiation and conduct of doctrinal inquiries"; rules which, if adopted, would make it much more difficult than it is now to initiate proceedings against one who

is guilty of heresy. This suggestion is similar to what the Episcopal Church has done recently after it exonerated Bishop Pike. And this is dangerous business. Not only does the church more and more condone outrageous heresy, but it wants to make sure that the ecclesiastical assemblies are no longer troubled by people who want to keep the Church faithful to the truth.

In conclusion Dr. Boer refers to a speech by Prof. Zwaanstra made on the floor of Synod in which Prof. Zwaanstra claimed that the Synod of Dordt accepted positions "as far apart as those of Herman Hoeksema and Harold Dekker...as valid expressions of the Reformed faith."

Dr. Boer pleads that the Christian Reformed Church ought to be able to do as much.

It is too bad that Prof. Zwaanstra's speech (which undersigned heard) was not recorded and is not available for publication. It was apparent to anyone that he was guilty of grossly twisting history and misrepresenting the fathers of the Reformed faith at Dordt. He did this to suit his own purpose and to try to bring reconciliation on the floor of Synod.

The conclusion of the matter is that while Prof. Boer is certainly correct in his evaluation of the Synod, he rejoices in something which actually sounds the death-knell for the Christian Reformed Church as a confessional and Reformed denomination.

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

The History Of Liturgics

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

We were quoting the last time from Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge. Although there is more in this work that is interesting and worthy of our attention, we will not quote it in its entirety now. Instead we will present a brief condensation of the history of liturgical practices in the early church.

We noted that worship in the early church was largely patterned after the customs and traditions of the synagogue. Gradually changes were made. Innovations were added, but we must also remember that although public worship was engaged in and developed, Liturgics in any real sense was not cultivated and recorded. Various liturgical forms that dealt specifically with Christ, the Sacrament of Communion, the Holy Spirit, God the Father and the agape, or love-feasts, were introduced.

Perhaps, however, the most significant aspect of worship in these early times had to do with the matter of prayer. In this connection we will quote from the above mentioned source:

It affected also the daily prayers. These daily devotions, which came to be called the Divine Office, had their beginning in the observance of hours of prayer. Two such hours were suggested by the natural instincts of the religious life; the morning, at cock-crowing, called matins; the evening, at candle-lighting, called vespers. These were at first observed in private or as times for family worship; but presently they were kept in the consecrated quiet of the church, people coming in at these seasons and saying their prayers, each person by himself. Gradually, other seasons of devotion began to be observed. First, the vigil,

which in its original form was a night of prayer before Easter, and then came to precede ordinary Sundays, and then to be a time of spiritual preparation for saints' days. On these occasions the morning prayer was in two parts, one in the night, called matins or nocturns; the other at dawn, called lauds. Then, to meet the eagerness for the privilege of prayer, three hours were kept in the day: the third hour, nine o'clock, called terce, remembering the disciples on the Day of Pentecost; the sixth hour, twelve o'clock, called sext, remembering St. Peter on the housetop; the ninth hour, called none, remembering how Peter and John went into the temple at the hour of prayer. Thus there were six times for daily prayer: matins, lauds, terce, sext, none, and vespers. The next step was to make these individual devotions public and congregational, and to have them led by the clergy. Of course, for busy people, such a continual exercise of prayer was impossible. For them, as is common today, the daily devotions were for the most part the private prayers which they said at the cock-crow and at the candle-lighting. The faithful who went to church six times a day were mainly ascetics, whose chief interest and occupation in life was the act of prayer. Presently, these devout persons were gathered into groups and societies, and disappeared from sight in monasteries. There they added to the six daily services two more: Prime, as the prayers before the daily chapter meeting, and Compline, before going to bed. Thus the cycle was completed. It had never had much place in the experience of the ordinary layman. It was understood to be intended for the clergy and for the members of religious orders.

Apart from a detailed evaluation of these practices, we may observe that the church in early times was certainly taught to pray; a necessary and spiritual art which in modern times is largely lost. The reason for this is not difficult to discover. In prayer the church is taught not only to rely upon, to trust in the living God but also to seek His guidance in all her ways. But heresy has enveloped the church, which gives the church the conceited notion that she really does not need God (God needs her) and she is quite independent and self-sufficient. When the spirit of such heresy takes hold, the consciousness of the need of daily prayer is lost and the church wends its way under the guidance of rationalism, logic and human intuition.

Another interesting observation of this time is the important place that the book of psalms occupied in the daily services. The faithful met at appointed hours to recite or to sing these psalms. The psalter was arranged to be gone over in a week. Later Scripture readings were added to these psalms and a few prayers, with versicles and responses. The Latin Church introduced hymns in meter, and lengthened lauds and vespers with commemorations of the saints. At a later time all of these things were brought into a condensed, compact and portable form called the Breviary, and the order or form for Holy Communion was simplified in what is called the *Missal*. The *Breviary* is the name of the Roman Catholic service-book containing what is called the "divine office" or the services for the canonical hours. It is a book of prayers and psalms as distinguished from the *Missal* which contains the altar-service, the rites for the administration of the sacraments, etc.

During the Middle Ages there was little change or development in the liturgy of the church. Traditionalism reigned supreme. Between 500 A.D. and 1200 A.D. there was very little scientific reflection upon the worship of the church. The hierarchy was firmly established and this hierarchical spirit utilized public worship and was well-established in the minds of the people. Since religious conservatism is nowhere stronger than in matters of liturgy, the power of the hierarchy held sway here, even after it had been seriously undermined elsewhere as a result of the mental fermentation that characterized the period. The Western Church was undivided. It held to a uniform and stereotyped liturgy. There was little thought given to study matters that pertain to public worship. Even after 1200 A.D. and up to the time of the Reformation, liturgics made very slight, if any, advance.

The Reformation of 1517 wrought many changes, both in the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches. P. Drews writes, "As the era of the Protestant Reformation came on, the need of further liturgical revision was felt by many, and steps in that direction were taken both with and without ecclesiastical authority." Within the Roman Catholic Church these changes are described in the following quote:

In 1535 Cardinal Quignon at the request of Pope

Clement VII undertook a revision of the breviary. Clement died before the completion of this work, and it was dedicated to Pope Paul III, who formally permitted the secular clergy to substitute it for the breviary unreformed. Quignon altered some legends from the lectionary; he arranged to have the Bible read at length and not, as had come to be the usage, in detached fragments; he arranged the psalter so as to be read in course and not interrupted by substituting special psalms. Also he took out two-thirds of the saints' days and all the offices of the Virgin, and omitted a great number of versicles, responses, invocations, and antiphons. In a second edition, however, he restored the antiphons by request of the theological faculty of Paris. This was the authorized breviary of the Western Church until it was superseded in 1568 by the present book, made by a commission of the Council of Trent.

Prof. Volbeda, in his *Liturgical Notes*, describes the changes effected by the Reformation. He writes:

The Reformation, 1517 A.D., onwards, was not only instinct with tremendous spiritual power, but also developed a wide Dogmatical, Ecclesiastical and Liturgical variety. If the old church had not stubbornly resisted reformation — which it did practically from the dawn of the later Middle Ages and particularly during the entire 15th century — and provoked the spirit aptly called Protestantism, the radical and revolutionary elements of the Reformation would presumably never have made their appearance. As it was, the great religious movement of the 16th century could not possibly escape developing a reactionary spirit. This situation perhaps accounts for the variety, liturgical as well as otherwise that works the Reformation.

Both in England and on the Continent the conditions of ecclesiastical strife were inducing among many a liturgical reaction. The Lutheran Church, indeed, held to many of the traditions of devotion, but the Calvinistic Churches of Switzerland and France, and the Puritan churches of England and Scotland, abandoned the old forms and adopted for the most part an extemporaneous worship. Whether all of the changes that were enacted were actually improvements is subject to question, for, as one author expressed it, "This was an incident in a bitter contention, and proceeded not so much from a dislike of the ancient prayers as from a dislike of the people who insisted on them."

But even then, Prof. Volbeda points out,

In spite of the fact that the reformation of Public Worship was on the docket everywhere, Liturgics received rather scant attention during the 16th-18th centuries. In so far as the subject of Public Worship engaged the mind of the Protestant churches, it was canvassed in the Confessions and the Church Orders of the churches. Liturgics, as an independent theological discipline, was hardly in evidence."

The 19th century witnessed, if not the birth, at least the pronounced development and efflorescence of the science of Liturgics. In all probability the factor that was most contributory to the genesis of Liturgics was the historical sense that sprang up in the 19th

century as a protest against the romanticism and revolutionism of the 18th century and that was profoundly stimulated toward the middle of the century by the rise of the Evolutionistic philosophy. The historical approach became the sign of the scientific times. Everything was studied in the light of its history. Worship, too, as a department of religious life was viewed first of all in its historical perspectives. Comparative study of the subject led to concentration on the principles of religion and life underlying the interesting phenomenon of Public Worship. Its religious nature naturally suggested Biblical research. As a result, the theological discipline of Liturgics emerged into view.

Today we have not only considerable differences in the liturgical practices of Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches but even among the diverse Protestant Churches there is no liturgical uniformity. During the last century, when the church the world over began to concern itself with and study matters that pertain to worship, problems have multiplied so that it is not

at all uncommon to find liturgical differences even in churches of the same denomination. What is especially interesting to note is that in the ecumenical movements of the present day, it is often liturgical problems, even more than doctrinal differences, that bog down the discussions and impede mergers. It seems as though a large fragment of the Protestant Church would be quite ready to merge with Rome if only some of the liturgical differences would be swept away. No longer does the question of WHAT one believes seem to be of great significance but the emphasis has shifted to HOW one worships.

We do not minimize the importance of either of these questions. They must be kept in proper balance and certainly we must know not only what we believe and why we believe what we do but we must also understand what we are doing in our worship of God and how our liturgical practices relate directly to the content of our faith. With this in mind we purpose to discuss our order of worship and compare our liturgical practices with those of others, past and present.

ATTENTION: OFFICEBEARERS

There will be an office bearers conference January 2, 1968 at 8:00 P.M., at the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. All present and former office bearers are invited to attend. Our speaker is Rev. G. Lubbers who will speak on the subject "Can we accept the baptism of the Romish Church."

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and Congregation of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church express their sorrow and sympathy to elder-elect Alvin Rau, his wife, and children in the sudden death of their son and brother

STEVEN RAY RAU

whom God in His inscrutable wisdom took unto Himself at the youthful age of 15 years. Our prayer is that our God may strengthen and sustain them in their sorrow by His comforting Spirit.

"And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels;" Malachi 3:17 (a).

Rev. J. Kortering, pastor
Mr. D. Engelsma, clerk

Be still, my soul! Thy God doth undertake
To guide the future, as He has the past;
Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing shake,
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.

IN MEMORIAM

On the evening of December 8, 1967 it pleased our Lord to take suddenly to Himself

STEVEN RAY RAU

at the youthful age of 15 years.

We bowed in deepest grief for many hours. We struggled to lay hold of comfort. In our tempest tossed souls God whispered, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me." He who had such a large place in our hearts and lives was surely made rich. Though he loved music here, we thought of the heavenly choir. Though he was filled with the zest of life here, we contemplated the joy of the redeemed creation.

Our trust in God's all sufficient grace has been strengthened. He was a mighty refuge to the parents and family in this time of storm. We know He will continue to be such for His promise is, "I am Jehovah, I change not." We commend them to this God of all grace.

There is an empty place in our midst, our lives will not be the same. There has been a great transformation for Steve, he now inhabits Father's house of many mansions, and is with Christ which is far better. His death has spoken to us, it has drawn us together in the bond of love as we await the day of great reunion.

Hope Protestant Reformed Church
Grand Rapids, Michigan
The Sunday School
The Young People's Society
The Choral Society
The Hope Heralds
The Ladies Society
The Men's Society

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

Dec. 11, 1967

Southeast's congregation relinquished their pastor to a classical appointment in Pella, Iowa, for two Sundays. While there Rev. Schipper also gave a lecture during the week and made personal calls on people who have recently shown interest in our cause. In his absence the catechism classes were conducted by the Elders, and the congregation enjoyed the Seminary Professors in their pulpit.

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Upon the advice of their church extension committee, Loveland's consistory requested the Mission Board to broadcast "The Reformed Witness Hour" on the local station, KLOV. The Mission Board has promised to undertake this effort for a year on a Sunday afternoon spot.

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The Jr. Mr. and Mrs. Society of Hope Church travelled to Southwest Church for a combined meeting with their society to discuss the second chapter of Paul's first Epistle to Timothy. A panel from the High School Board, in the after-recess period, discussed our future school and related matters.

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A Thanksgiving Day Program of Loveland's Prot. Ref. Chr. School featured Rev. Engelsma in a talk on true thanksgiving. His address was based on Psalm 136 and led the school children, and a few of the parents, in the observance of Christian thankfulness as expressed in, "...for His mercy endureth for ever."

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Hudsonville's Sr. and Jr. choirs combined to render a Christmas program after the Sunday service Dec. 24.

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Oak Lawn's Christmas Singspiration, sponsored by the Young People's Society, designated the offering to be used for the purchase of books for their cmkrch library.

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The church extension committee of Oak Lawn published for distribution a publication entitled, "The Crisis in the C. R. Church", written by a member of one of the C.R. churches. This literature is currently being mailed to over a thousand homes in the area. This same committee has begun to mail out "Scriptural Meditations" to 200 families, selected at random; obeying the injunction found in Ecc. 11:1 — "Cast thy bread upon the waters...."

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Adams St. School's Mothers' Club sponsored a Bazaar recently, selling their wares for quite a sub-

stantial sum, thereby enriching their coffers. Those are the coffers into which they periodically dip for many and varied benefits for the school. The men were also invited to the bazaar to spend their coffee break in a sociable way with their own kind.

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Quiet Thought from Southeast's bulletin: "We need to ask the Lord to save us from evil hearing as well as from evil speaking."

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Lynden's "Studies in Biblical Doctrines" received a letter from Statesboro, Georgia acknowledging the benefits accruing to a leader of a Ladies' Bible Class in that city; and a letter from Alpena, So. Dak., from a member of the Presbyterian Church, requesting an explanation of the expression, "Election is the heart of the church," saying that they hear so little of that doctrine any more. Some one else in strange waters finding the bread cast thereon to be palatable and nourishing.

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Rev. Van Baren, in a "preparatory sermon" preached a sermon based on Prov. 28:13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." This profound truth might well be remembered by each of us when we are saying our evening prayers.

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While on a classical appointment to Isabel and to Forbes, Loveland's pastor gave a mid-week lecture in each of these places. In Isabel Rev. Engelsma spoke on, "The Performance of Good Works," and the title of the lecture in Forbes was, "Loving Our Enemies." In this way our vacant churches enjoy a few "fringe benefits" from their classical appointees.

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The following lifted from First's bulletin: "Student Richard Moore and his family thank the congregation for the food shower given them. The gifts of food and money will cut our food bill in half for at least three months. We thank God for preserving in our churches the mercies of Christ that make such giving from the heart possible."

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Besides the lectures mentioned above, the Mission Board also scheduled lectures by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema in Sioux Center, Iowa Nov. 30, and in Edgerton, Minn., Dec. 5.

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Who in the world of war, bloodshed, riots and general lawlessness can wish their friends a happy new year but the Christian?" Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he." Prov. 16:20. Happy New Year!

...see you in church

J.M.F.